

# Seattle febnet

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From Your Federal Executive Board **September - October 2002**

## CHAIR'S CORNER

*By Larry Andriesen*



Dear Friends:

Wow! What a year! Ever since Bill Walters handed me the gavel at last year's SFEB Annual Meeting, it seems that I haven't stopped running! We've done alot this year, and I hope we've left a good legacy for future leaders.

The Executive Leadership Council retreat in October was well attended. In addition to reviewing the previous year objectives and receiving reports from the committee chairs, we examined what about the SFEB was working and not working. We strengthened our resolve to build a community and an identity, both within the federal workforce and the community at large. We also committed to put the SFEB on a more businesslike footing.

In November, we celebrated the 40th birthday of the Federal Executive Boards. It was in 1961 that John Kennedy established 20 FEBs in the country to increase the economy and effectiveness of Federal organizations outside of Washington, D.C. Seattle was one of the original FEBs. Another successful Combined Federal Campaign was concluded

in December, but not without some super efforts from the CFC committee and the Loaned Executives. After the campaign, we took a close look at some better ways to manage the CFC.

In April, we were able to attract Dr. Jim Thurber, Director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University, to give us some of his insights into happenings in the other Washington. In May, we celebrated Public Service Recognition. And in June, 22 agencies came together for the job fair that we sponsored to try to help deal with the changing demographics in the Federal workforce. Over 2000 people showed up to learn about Federal employment.

The SFEB Committees were all very active and sponsored many worthwhile events. I hope that the actions of the SFEB this last year were to your satisfaction. I believe that the SFEB is financially strong and energetic, and is capable of much good work. It was a pleasure for me to serve this last year. Of course, as everybody knows, the real pleasure is working with the fine staff of Anne Tiernan and Kathy Dyer.

Farewell and Best Wishes,



### **2003 Per Diem Rates**

The General Services Administration has announced 2003 federal per diem rates, leaving most lodging rates unchanged from this year. The new rates for official business travel by federal employees take effect October 1 and can be downloaded from GSA's web site.

GSA's Office of Government wide Policy decided to hold most lodging rates at fiscal 2002 levels and to maintain the standard continental United States (CONUS) rate of \$55 for lodging and \$30 for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). GSA establishes the standard CONUS per diem rate for all cities not specifically shown in per diem rate listings.

GSA is continuing to expand its Federal Premier Lodging Program, which seeks to guarantee that a certain number of rooms are available within the per diem rate in specific geographical areas. Before the program was launched, there was no guarantee that rooms would be available at the federal rate. GSA plans to have contracts in all of the top 75 travel destinations by the end of 2002.

### **Computers for Learning**

Effective October 1, 2002, all computer transfers must be submitted electronically by agencies via the website eliminating the need for paperwork. GSA needs feedback from Federal agency users and property folks about the "usability" of the site. Federal agencies should go to a secure website at

[www.computers.fed.gov/property/pm1.asp](http://www.computers.fed.gov/property/pm1.asp) to obtain information. Additional information is available at [computers.learning@gsa.gov](mailto:computers.learning@gsa.gov).

Schools should continue to be referred to [www.computers.fed.gov](http://www.computers.fed.gov) to register on line for excess computers. The site is being upgraded and will soon contain a feature that automatically contacts schools every six months to update their applications and notify them of their status.

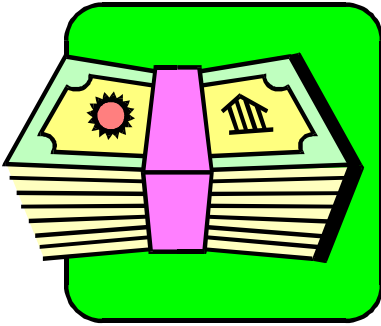


### **FEHB Rates Climbing Again**

Premiums in the Federal employees Health benefits program will climb an average of 11.1 percent in the 2003 plan year but a new

tax break that will be available effective next July will ease the pain to enrollees somewhat. The Office of Personnel Management announced that starting in the open season that begins 11/1/02, enrollees will be able to choose from among 188 plans, some of which have essentially held the line on premiums and a few of which will show small decreases. However, the 11.1% average is the fifth year in a row of increases at or around the double-digit range, with fee-for-service plan premiums rising an average of 10.5 percent and health maintenance organization premiums up an average of 13.6 percent. That translates into an average increase for the typical self-only enrollee of \$4.45 per pay period and \$10.21 per pay period for the typical family enrollee. OPM officials said, the increases are at the low end of premium hikes being experienced by state and local governments and other major employers. As in past years, OPM officials said rising use of medical care and prescription drug costs are primarily to blame for the increases.

## Flexible Savings Accounts Approved



Effective next July executive branch employees will be eligible to create flexible savings accounts, in which pre-tax payroll dollars can be used to

pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses as well as child and elder care expenses. The FSAs will operate separately from the “premium conversion” arrangement, in which active employees since late 2000 have been able to pay their FEHB premiums with pre-tax dollars. Employees will be able to participate in both premium conversion and in the FSAs. Like premium conversion, the FSA arrangement will not apply to retirees unless the tax code is changed. Employees of the US Postal Service, federal judiciary and some bank regulatory agencies already have similar programs in place. The accounts will be funded with biweekly payroll deductions and there will be no government contributions.

The OPM plan envisions two types of FSAs, with employees having the choice of participating in either, both or neither. One, directed to medical costs, will allow employees to set aside up to \$3,000 per year to pay costs such as co-payments and deductibles as well as costs that may not be covered by insurance such as dental and eye care. In the other, directed to dependent care, they will be able to designate up to \$5,000 a year for childcare and/or elder care costs. They note that under the tax code, money put into such accounts is “use or lose” that is, it cannot be rolled over from one tax year to another. That should not be a major concern regarding child and elder care accounts, in which the costs are regular and relatively predictable, officials say. However,

usage of co-payments, deductibles and other medical expenses that would qualify for the medical FSA is much more irregular and unpredictable, meaning that participants will need to exercise care in deciding how much to designate and how to use that money.

OPM expects to hold an open season next May for employees to choose whether to set up one or both types of FSA accounts and how much to designate to put into them, with the benefits beginning in July. There will be a second open season running concurrent with the FEHB open season next autumn and the two open seasons will run together from then on. The accounts will be administered by an outside provider, not by the government. OPM is preparing a bid solicitation and hopes to have a contract in place early in the new year.

## Gov Online Learning Center

OPM Director Kay Coles James launched the site on July 23, 2002. Per Ms. James

she states “It is critical for agencies to use available learning technology tools, such as the Gov Online Learning Center, to develop a world class workforce to provide world class service to the public. Technology allows us to deliver the right kind of training, at the right time, to the right people.”

The center is a Government-wide resource that supports development of the Federal workforce through simplified and one-stop access to high quality e-Training products and services. The creation of the Center is the first phase of the President’s Management agenda e-training initiative and will continue to grow with the addition of products and services that meet the common needs of the workforce.



The site is designed as a virtual campus that houses free training courses and knowledge resources in each of its rooms. You can explore the center by visiting or clicking on the doors of the various rooms, which act as gateways to training and information. As you check into the site you will find a Registration Desk, a Help Desk, a Search and Select and the Learning Management Office. To assist you are the Virtual Classroom, e-books and the Resource Center. Federal workers can take free online courses on about 30 subjects ranging from project management to coping with stress. Courses take anywhere from two hours to eight hours to complete, at no charge to the employee or agency. Website address is: [www.golearn.gov](http://www.golearn.gov).

## **NARFE: YOUR VOICE IN WASHINGTON**

The men and women who are Federal Employees are special. They achieve the highest levels of service and dedication to their nation. And Federal Employees are unique in another way too. They are eligible for membership in NARFE – the National Association of Retired Federal Employees. And no, you do not have to be “retired” to join NARFE.

Why is NARFE for you? Simply put, NARFE serves those who serve, and have served, this nation as federal civilian employees. NARFE is the only organization dedicated to protecting the earned retirement benefits of federal employees, retirees, and their survivors. NARFE’s commitment is to secure the future that federal employees have worked to achieve for themselves and their families.

In recent years, we’ve seen the earned retirement annuities of federal retirees threatened by lawmakers looking for new sources of revenue. Or the cost-of-living (COLA) adjustments are reduced or delayed as a way to “reduce government spending.”

It was NARFE that led the efforts to fend off proposed delays in COLAs, and a proposal to increase employee health care premiums for federal workers. NARFE is currently championing legislation that will allow federal and military retirees to pay their health insurance premiums with pre-tax earnings. The bills, H.R. 2125 and S. 1022, will result in a yearly tax savings of as much as one-third of retirees’ premium costs, depending upon their respective state income tax

l a w s .  
Currently, most  
F e d e r a l  
employees and  
retirees pay an  
average of 29  
percent of the  
health care  
p r e m i u m s  
under the  
F e d e r a l  
Employees  
Health Benefits  
P r o g r a m  
( F E H B P ) .  
E x e c u t i v e  
b r a n c h  
e m p l o y e e s  
have had this

health care tax break, known as “premium conversion” since October 2000. It was extended to employees of the legislative branch at the beginning of 2001. Once a person retires from Federal service, they will lose that benefit, unless NARFE is successful in securing passage of the Premium Conversion legislation introduced by Senator John Warner (R-VA) and Representative Tom Davis (R-VA).

Over the years, NARFE has been responsible for the restoration of a full annuity to a retiree following the death of a designated survivor; succeeded in having annuitants included in the annual open season to allow changes in their FEHBP coverage; and initiated legislation to allow survivor annuitants to remarry at age 55



without loss of their federal survivor annuity or FEHBP coverage. And these are just a few of the way NARFE has worked to protect the earned retirement benefits of active and former federal employees.

NARFE has approximately 400,000 members with over 1,600 local chapters. NARFE local chapters are combined into federations in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, Panama, and the Philippines.

And now, NARFE has special reduced membership rates for current federal employees. For information on NARFE, call our toll-free membership number, 1-800-627-3394.

## ***COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN***



### **Campaign Dates**

September 3<sup>rd</sup> marked the beginning of the 2002 campaign with completion scheduled for November 15<sup>th</sup>. The shorter campaign season is the decision of the CFC Planning Committee in an effort to shorten the time that Loaned Executives are away from their agencies. Many federal executives have commented that an absence of nearly four months is too long for employees to be on detail to the CFC. With the campaign scheduled to end November 15, Loaned Executives will return to their agencies November 22<sup>n</sup>. This shortens the length of the detail by two weeks from previous years. The CFC committee asks for your support to complete campaigns by the deadline set and will continue to look for ways to improve the

efficiency of conducting the campaign within all federal agencies.

## **8,000 Donors Wanted!**

Can you believe that over the last five years the CFC has increased in overall contributions every year and has had fewer donors each of those years? IT'S TRUE! The goal for this year is to increase participation to 8,000 donors which would be an increase of 455 over last year. This is a very reasonable goal considering King County has over 19,300 federal employees.

In addition to increasing the number of donors, the overall dollar amount was increased by \$58,000 to a new overall goal of \$2,675,000 which is attainable if we reach our donor goal and if we stretch just a little further.

## **CFC Kickoff and Launch at the Pier**

Thursday, September 26 will mark the kickoff for the government campaigns. The event will be held at Pier 62 with entertainment provided by "Hit Explosion". We will once again expect to see the "Bring Home the Bacon Grand Prix" with proceeds going to support non-profit organizations in our community.

The Walk to Care will begin from the Jackson Federal Building starting at 10:00. Lunch, entertainment, the Grand Prix and prize drawings will begin at 11:30.

## **2002 CFC Committee**

Jeanette Leino, Director, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is Chair of the 2002 campaign and Carmen Keller, Regional Commissioner, Social Security Administration is Vice-Chair. Other positions include:

## Area Chairs:

*Katherine Nash - US Postal Service;  
Harry Manaka - IRS;  
Carl Rabun - SSA;  
Timothy Williams - VA PSHCS;  
Tom Bonorden - US Army, 70<sup>th</sup> Reg Sup  
Command*

*Eligibility Chair: Steve Edwards - NARA  
Labor Rep: Don Webb - US Postal Service  
SFEB: Anne Tiernan  
Charity Rep: Karen White - Comm Health  
Charities*

*Webmaster: Glen Shaw*

*Events Coordinators:*

*Jan Still - SSA; Rachel Burgess - Dept of Navy*

## A Special Thank You

The agencies providing the team of Loaned Executives this year include:

*Dept of Housing and Urban Development  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Federal Aviation Administration  
General Services Administration  
Internal Revenue Service  
Social Security Administration  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Postal Service  
V A - Puget Sound Health Care System*

***We appreciate your support!***



## SEATTLE FEB HAPPENINGS

### Management of Human Capital - Corporate Perspective and Federal Practice

Margaret Regan, President of Future Work Institute will use research and consulting expertise to help clients envision the

manager, employee and customer of the future. Ms. Regan will address many of the challenges of succession planning and working with the changing workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. She will be joined by Marilyn Grey, our lunchtime speaker who will speak on "Dealing with Change through Humor". This presentation is worth attending on it's own as Ms. Grey will enlighten our day and provide us a perspective of the world we live in. The day will conclude with a fast paced interactive panel of Federal managers discussing New Directions and Practical Approaches to managing Human Capital. This full day seminar, which includes lunch and breaks, is just \$99.00 and will be held at NOAA, Western Admin Support Center, 7600 Sandpoint Way NE on Tuesday, October 8.

## Associate Program Nominations

- Are you ready to explore new and challenging programs?
- Are you seeking new opportunities for professional growth?
- Are you interested in working with peers and managers from other federal agencies?



If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, the Associates Program of the SFEB is for you. The program is a career development program for employees in grades GS-9 through GS-12 or the equivalent. Candidates are nominated by their agency and chosen by a panel through a competitive process. Once selected, candidates actively participate in designing the program to help meet their particular needs through training, group projects, job shadows, monthly meetings, and other assignments.

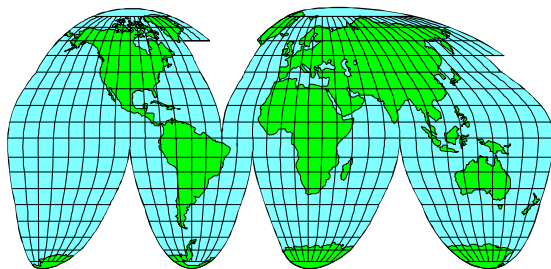
The deadline for submitting applications is Friday, October 25, 2002. For more information visit our website at [www.seattle.feb.gov](http://www.seattle.feb.gov) or contact our office at 206-220-6171.

## **Long Term Care Comparison Briefing**

In addition to the Long Term Care Partners briefings being offered in your agencies and around the community the SFEB will be holding another LTC comparison briefing on Thursday, October 10 at 9:00 and 11:00 in Room 2886 of the Jackson Federal Building.

Open season for the federal long term care program is from July 1 through December 31. This program offers eligible participants one more alternative to help secure your financial future. If you are married and in good health, it may be worth your time to compare the benefits of the federal program with the benefits from an outside program.

LTC costs may be one of the largest financial burdens you face during retirement. Without planning, this future liability may wreak havoc on you and your family. LTC insurance may potentially increase your financial security during your retirement years.



## **Peace Corps Briefing**

The Unified Programs is sponsoring a reception to welcome Mr. Gaddi Vasquez to the Seattle community. Mr. Vasquez is the newly appointed Director of the Peace Corps. He is the son of a migrant farm workers and native of Carrizo, Texas. He has the

distinction of being the first Hispanic American to be appointed to the lead position at the Peace Corps.

Come out and hear how Mr. Vasquez bridged the success gap in his own life and what the future goals are for the Peace Corps. There will be refreshments and a time to greet Mr. Vasquez. Once he returns to his busy post in Washington, DC, we may not have this opportunity again. Please join us on October 15, 2002 in the Jackson Federal Building, Room 2866 at 11:30 to welcome Mr. Vasquez.

## **Winona LaDuke**

The federal community is invited to attend a presentation on Friday, October 18, 2002 at Benaroya Hall, 200 University St in downtown Seattle, to hear the inspiring words of Ms. Winona LaDuke who is an internationally renowned Native American Indian activist and advocate for environmental, women's and children's rights. She is the founder and Campaign Director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project, a reservation-based land acquisition, environmental advocacy and cultural organization. She is also founder and co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network.

## **Disability Event**

Mark your calendars for October 30, 2002 from 9:00 until 3:00 in the Jackson Federal Building, South Auditorium for a "Person with Disabilities Information Fair." The purpose of the fair is to assist agencies in their comfort level in hiring people with disabilities. This adaptive technology fair will provide an opportunity for you to talk to people with disabilities regarding their needs, to acquaint managers with resources necessary and to talk with a company who can assess space and determine what is needed to accommodate persons with disabilities.

## Get Moving Motivators

### *Visualize yourself healthy.*



Take a picture of yourself and have it morphed at a photo shop to see what you'd look like 10, 20 or 30 pounds lighter. Make copies and paste it everywhere.

Set aside your favorite magazines and only allow yourself to read them at the gym. If they start piling up, you know that it's time to get to the gym.

Not exercising at all is equivalent to smoking a pack a day!

Erase years off your body. With regular exercise and healthy nutrition you will look and feel 10 years younger.

Use your daily planner. Schedule exercise as if it were an important meeting. Use a bright colored marker, so that it stands out as a reminder to get your butt in gear!

Look at your kids pictures as a reminder that you want to be around and have energy to share life with them.



Reward yourself!! Whenever you accomplish what you had set out to do, have a non-food related treat in mind (eg: a day at the spa, new shoes, new clothes.....).

Fit tips brought to you by your Fitness Director,  
Allison Miles.  
Jackson Federal Building Fitness Center 220-  
6134 or [a90@psc.gov](mailto:a90@psc.gov)



# Blood.

Give a little,  
so someone can live.

Puget Sound Blood Program  
292-6500

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